

# Andrew Jackson and Federal Support of Internal Improvements: A Reappraisal

By RAYMOND H. PULLEY\*

Andrew Jackson seized upon the occasion of his farewell address, March 4, 1837 to pridefully announce that by the close of his administration he had finally "overthrown" a conspiracy of "powerful interests" which had been at work to saddle the people of the Republic with unconstitutional and "extravagant schemes of internal improvements."<sup>1</sup> Eight years earlier in his first inaugural address the Old Hero had pledged his government to "a strict and faithful economy" in the management of the public revenue.<sup>2</sup> He continued to preach economy in government spending throughout his administration.

Jackson's veto of the Maysville Road bill and his war on the Second Bank of the United States seems to bear out the effectiveness of his overthrow of "powerful interests" and economic privilege. One recent analyst has declared that the President thus established himself as a strong defender of the sacred Jeffersonian gospel of "simplicity and economy, separation of political authority from the conduct of economic affairs."<sup>3</sup>

Many of Jackson's contemporaries believed that he was no friend of internal improvements at public expense. Henry Clay, the champion of planned economy through the American System, vehemently damned Jackson's killing of the Maysville bill and went so far as to declare that the chief executive ought to be censured.<sup>4</sup> Hezekiah Niles, publisher of an influential Baltimore journal and friend of the American System, deplored the veto. The vocal editor abandoned

---

\*Raymond H. Pulley, a native of Chesapeake, Virginia, is third-place winner in the graduate division. Mr. Pulley earned his B. A. degree at Old Dominion College, his M. A. at Emory University, and is now working toward his doctorate at the University.

1. James D. Richardson (comp.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, D.C., 1897), I, 1518-1519. Hereafter cited as *Messages and Papers*.

2. *Ibid.*, I, 1000.

3. Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics and Belief* (New York, 1960), p. 29.

4. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston, 1937), pp. 237-238.

all hope that Jackson would leave the country in the advancement of improvements after the famous veto. Niles sorrowfully stated: "It appears that the question as to internal improvements is settled—as far as it depends upon president Jackson."<sup>5</sup>

Jackson's vetoes of six internal improvement bills,<sup>6</sup> together with the statements of contemporaries such as Clay and Niles, have led some historians to believe that Old Hickory was opposed to the general tenet of federal aid for public works. Moreover, it has been maintained that Jackson's apparent antipathy to the principle of federal aid for improvements tended to impede the progress of internal projects. For example, fifty years ago John Spencer Bassett claimed that the veto of the Maysville bill "checked the impulse for roads and canals at national expense."<sup>7</sup> Edward Channing set forth a similar view, stating that Jackson's opposition to improvements "put an end for a generation to the building up of a land transportation system at federal expense."<sup>8</sup> Glyndon G. Van Deusen believed that the veto represented a return to the "Jeffersonian ideal of limited government" and an acceptance of the sovereignty of the states in the area of improvements.<sup>9</sup>

Recently several historians have portrayed Jackson's presidency as a period of frugality in government spending, opposition to aid to private corporations, promotion of economic freedom, and strict construction.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Dorfman, a leading student of American economic thought, states that opposition to internal improvements was a part of the Jacksonian "party's platform."<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive study of government support of improvement projects during the nineteenth century finds that the Jackson Administration marked the

5. *Niles' Weekly Register*, December 11, 1830. For further comment on the Maysville veto and Jackson's stand on improvements see also, June 5, June 12, and September 4, 1830.

6. Edmund C. Nelson, "Presidential Influence on the Policy of Internal Improvements," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, IV (January 1906), 67. Hereafter cited as "Presidential Influence."

7. John Spencer Bassett, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (Garden City, N. J., 1911) II, 479.

8. Edward Channing, *A History of the United States* (New York, 1921), V, 397.

9. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, p. 238.

10. Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* (Princeton, N. J., 1961), pp. 40-41; Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, p. 29; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945), p. 58; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848* (New York, 1959), pp. 36-37.

11. Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization, 1606-1865* (New York, 1946), II, 601.

beginning of retrogression of interest in public works.<sup>12</sup> Finally, several American History survey texts relate much the same story.<sup>13</sup>

In short, several reputable historians have depicted Andrew Jackson as a staunch enemy of federal support of internal improvements. This picture of the Old Hero, however, loses much of its force under an examination of disbursements of federal funds for improvements during the period of 1825-1836. According to figures tabulated from Treasury Department reports, Jackson approved the spending of \$11,060,099.79 for public works projects. During his first term in office he signed appropriation bills amounting to \$2,643,722.56 more than had been approved by his immediate predecessor in the White House, John Quincy Adams. The second term totals rose to \$4,363,516.73 above the Adams years.<sup>14</sup> This new evidence indicates that Jackson's presidency witnessed a substantial increase in federal expenditures for public works and suggests that Old Hickory's attitude toward the internal improvements question should be reexamined.

The Republic of which Andrew Jackson became president in 1829 was an expanding and thriving country. Between 1800 and 1840 the population of the nation more than tripled;<sup>15</sup> immense areas of unexplored territory were added to the domain through cessions from France and Spain; new agricultural lands were opened in the South

12. Carter Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800-1890* (New York, 1960), pp. 41-45.

13. For example, Dumas Malone and Basil Rauch in *Empire for Liberty* (New York, 1960), I, 448, state that the Maysville veto "slanted in the direction of state rights and strict construction, marked a check in the policy of internal improvements at federal expense, and anticipated opposition to federal aid to private enterprise." Oliver P. Chitwood and Frank L. Owsley in *A Short History of the American People* (New York, 1945), I, 433, declare: "Jackson's stand on internal improvements had the effect of putting a decided check on the construction at federal expense of roads and canals in the states." John M. Blum, *et. al.*, *The National Experience* (New York, 1963), pp. 221-222, concur stating: "At most it can be said that his [Jackson's] Maysville veto checked the acceleration of such appropriations."

It must be noted, however, in Richard Hofstadter, *et. al.*, *The American Republic* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1959), I, 402-403, a different view is taken. These authors state: "It is sometimes said that the message [Maysville veto] dealt a death blow to the movement for internal improvements. But Jackson's behavior on other occasions was often inconsistent with the Maysville veto, for he put his signature to many internal improvement measures."

14. *Senate Documents*, 26th Congress, 1st Session, document no. 450, "A Report of the Secretary of the Treasury of Expenditures for the Government from 1824 to 1839."

15. Between 1800 and 1840 the population increased from 5,297,000 to 17,120,000. U. S. Bureau of Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D. C., 1960), p. 7.

and Northwest; domestic and foreign commerce was swelling;<sup>16</sup> and the industrial revolution arrived full-blown, ushering in an era of manufacturing and mechanization. The material advance of the nation imposed heavy burdens upon existing transportation facilities, and from many quarters a hue and cry arose for the initiation of a vast program of internal improvements to insure progress and full exploitation of natural resources.<sup>17</sup> In short, the economic growth of the young Republic was seen to be contingent upon the development of harbor facilities, clearance of rivers, and the construction of turnpikes, bridges and canals.

After the establishment of independence, Americans turned their attention inward and began to reflect upon the problem of how the country's transportation facilities might best be improved. Three basic answers to the problem seemed to emerge. Some felt that the construction of improvements was the responsibility of private enterprise, while others believed that the individual states should maintain sovereignty over projects of internal works. Finally, there were those who thought it incumbent upon the federal government to provide a centrally planned program of improvements to promote the general welfare, paid for out of public funds.<sup>18</sup> Much heated debate was generated by the three philosophies of improvement. The result was a hodgepodge of works development. Internal improvements were undertaken by the federal government as well as by the states and private companies. No central authority was brought forth to give the various projects a unity of direction.

Federal activity in the area of improvements steadily grew during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The founding fathers were highly interested in the internal improvement of the nation<sup>19</sup> and soon after the establishment of the general government, the First Congress provided for the construction of lighthouses, beacons, buoys, and public piers in various parts of the country as aids to commerce.<sup>20</sup> Thereafter, routine appropriations were set aside for similar projects. The new government also filled one of its constitutional prerogatives

16. The value of exports increased from \$32,000,000 in 1800 to \$122,000,000 in 1835. *Ibid.*, p. 538.

17. Balthasar H. Meyer (ed.), *History of Transportation in the United States before 1860* (Washington, D. C., 1917), p. 132; George R. Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York, 1951), pp. 5, 18-19.

18. Carter Goodrich, "National Planning of Internal Improvements," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXIII (March 1949), 18.

19. Joseph H. Harrison, Jr., "The Internal Improvement Issue in the Politics of the Union, 1783-1825" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1954), pp. 35-43.

20. Richard Peters, et. al. (eds.), *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, 1789-1873* (Boston, 1848-1873), I, 53-54.

by providing for the establishment of post roads,<sup>21</sup> and money was regularly set aside for this purpose. The planning and building of public turnpikes and canals, however, was left to private companies. Several projects were thus initiated. The Santee Canal in South Carolina and the Middlesex Canal in Massachusetts are notable examples. Numerous turnpike companies emerged. Moreover, various states took an interest in improvements within their boundaries. For example, Virginia and Maryland bought shares of stock in private companies which proposed to improve the James and Potomac Rivers.<sup>22</sup>

In April, 1808, the first comprehensive proposal was made to put the Federal Government in the business of road and canal building. Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury under Thomas Jefferson, submitted a report to Congress calling for a \$20,000,000 program of internal improvements. This plan called for the construction of a great turnpike from Maine to Georgia, the clearing of waterways flowing into the Atlantic, and the building of canals to connect rivers and bays, and to circumvent falls. He argued that only the central government could properly execute plans for the linking of the nation's vital transportation arteries. He proposed to finance the work through annual appropriations from public funds of \$2,000,000 for ten years.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, due to the financial strains imposed upon the government by Jefferson's Embargo, Gallatin's program failed to be translated into effective works.<sup>24</sup> His report, however, did furnish private companies with a general plan to follow. The national government did provide limited assistance to internal improvements during the Jefferson Administration when, in 1802, Congress declared that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of land in Ohio be used for road construction. This act was ultimately consummated in the building of the Cumberland, or National, Road, which originated at Cumberland, Maryland, and traversed Pennsylvania to the state of Ohio.<sup>25</sup>

Down to the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, the question of whether or not the Federal Government under the Constitution possessed the power to undertake and support national works of internal

21. *Ibid.*, 232-233.

22. Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads*, pp. 20-21.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-36; Harrison, "The Internal Improvement Issue in the Politics of the Union," p. 241.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-254.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-154; 157-160.

improvement became a leading issue. Such was particularly the case after the War of 1812.<sup>26</sup> That conflict, which dramatized the woeful inadequacy of transportation, definitely increased momentum in favor of improvements. The national Congressional leaders, Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, offered the argument that under a liberal interpretation of the general welfare clause, the government had both the responsibility and authority to effect a public works program.<sup>27</sup> They were opposed by the last presidents of the Virginia Dynasty, James Madison and James Monroe, who advocated a strict interpretation of the Constitution. The latter believed that Congress could maintain lighthouses, beacons, buoys, public piers and post roads, but not an elaborate program of turnpike and canal construction.<sup>28</sup> This division of opinion within the high councils of government led to Madison's veto of Calhoun's Bonus Bill of 1817, which proposed to set aside as a permanent national fund for internal improvements the \$1,500,000 paid by the directors of the Second Bank of the United States for their charter.<sup>29</sup>

Monroe, during his tenure of office, followed Madison's example and vetoed a bill which provided that tolls be established for the maintenance of the Cumberland Road. He declared: "A power to establish tolls by penalties, implies a power to adopt and execute a complete system of internal improvements. I am of the opinion," he continued, "that Congress do [*sic*] not possess this power." He proposed that a constitutional amendment be presented granting these powers to Congress.<sup>30</sup> This remained the official attitude of the administration down to the election of John Quincy Adams.

Despite Monroe's veto of the Cumberland Road toll bill, several appropriations were passed by Congress and signed by the President. A measure providing for improvement of rivers and harbors was enacted, and in April, 1824, a bill calling for the survey of proposed road and canal routes won approval. Clay was the energetic champion of these bills,<sup>31</sup> and it was at this time that his American System achieved a mature stage of expression.<sup>32</sup> As an economic planner Clay held that the government ought to institute a program of centrally planned and financed internal improvements for the ad-

26. Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution*, p. 18.

27. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 109; 114-115; Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun: Nationalist, 1782-1828* (Indianapolis, 1944), pp. 132-133.

28. Nelson, "Presidential Influence," pp. 20-29.

29. Wiltse, *Calhoun: Nationalist*, p. 137.

30. Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, I, 711-712.

31. Nelson, "Presidential Influence," pp. 31-32.

32. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 160-163.

vancement of the general welfare; as a practical politician he worked to get separate bills through Congress as best he could. It was within the framework of the idealism of the American System, and the realities of politics, that improvements were promoted by the Federal Government down through the end of the Jackson years.

Andrew Jackson served as a senator from Tennessee between 1823-1825, during the closing years of the Monroe Administration. Here the Old Hero compiled an impressively consistent record by voting in favor of seven internal improvement measures. One bill provided for federal subscription to the stock of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal corporation.<sup>33</sup> The other six pieces of legislation encompassed the entire spectrum of public works—roads, canal surveys, river improvements, and the Cumberland Road. Jackson apparently took little part in the debates surrounding these measures, except to stress the necessity for frugality. Moreover, he seemingly expressed no doubts as to the constitutional power of Congress to legislate in the area of improvements.<sup>34</sup>

The conservative attitude of the administration on the question of national improvements was dramatically changed when John Quincy Adams assumed the presidency in 1825 as a staunch supporter of the American System. He possessed none of the reservations of his predecessors concerning the constitutionality of federal improvements, and although Adams was faced with a hostile Congress during his four years in office, notable works were undertaken. Neither a carefully formulated plan such as Gallatin's nor as extensive a program of works as Clay hoped for was forthcoming, but rising public demand for better transportation facilities convinced Congress that ever increasing sums should be set aside for internal improvements.

During Adams' residency in the executive mansion a record high sum of \$2,026,430.25 was spent for internal improvement projects.<sup>35</sup> This was paralleled by an extraordinary rise in government subscription to stock in private companies. Some \$1,585,000 in public money was invested in the Chesapeake and Delaware, Louisville and Port-

---

33. *Niles' Weekly Register*, June 12, 1830. Upon the occasion of the Maysville veto, Niles published Jackson's congressional record on improvements votes.

34. *Annals of Congress*, 18th Congress, 1st Session, 137, 294, 570, 765. One measure called for the surveying and construction of a road lying totally within the state of Missouri. It is interesting to note that Martin Van Buren, later to have much influence over Jackson's decision to veto the Maysville Road bill, voted against the Cumberland Road, and Chesapeake and Delaware Canal stock subscription bills of 1825.

35. *Sen. Docs.*, 26th Cong., 1st Sess., doc. no. 450.

land, Dismal Swamp, and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal companies.<sup>36</sup> The Cumberland Road alone received \$715,245, and lesser sums were allocated for other roads, canals, surveys and routine projects.<sup>37</sup>

According to one historian of the period, when Old Hickory ascended to the presidency, "all factions expected the Jackson party to oppose in some fashion the nationalizing tendencies of the Adams-Clay administration."<sup>38</sup> It is clear that the new administration repudiated the American System to the degree that no centrally directed plan of improvements was formulated. Jackson abruptly terminated the practice of government subscription to stock in private canal companies, even though he had voted for such legislation as a senator between 1823-1825. This does not mean, however, that the principle of government aid for improvements was repudiated. Indeed, Jackson approved the spending of \$1,296,324.68 for public works during his first year in the White House, or \$924,149.27 more than had been expended by Adams during his inaugural year.<sup>39</sup> Major disbursements for 1829 included \$207,437.64 for the continuation of the Cumberland Road and \$1,088,852.97 for other improvements.<sup>40</sup>

Internal improvements became a vital issue in the politics of the nation during the second year of Old Hickory's tenure. Between May 27 and December 6, 1830 Jackson killed four improvements bills in an unprecedented display of the presidential veto power. The first, the much acclaimed Maysville veto, set aside a congressional plan to subscribe to \$150,000 of stock in a corporation chartered by the state of Kentucky to build a short road from Lexington to Maysville. The plan was one of Henry Clay's "pet projects."<sup>41</sup>

Jackson saw the bill as one of "purely local character," because the proposed road lay "exclusively within the limits of a State." He asserted that Congressional appropriations for local projects were unconstitutional, and he recommended an amendment to settle the question of federal power in the area of improvements. Moreover, the Old Hero declared that he believed a national program of works was inexpedient until the public debt had been retired.<sup>42</sup>

In light of the number of improvements bills ultimately signed by

---

36. Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads*, p. 41.

37. *Sen. Docs.*, 26th Cong., 1st Sess., doc. no. 450.

38. Charles G. Sellers, *James K. Polk: Jacksonian, 1789-1843* (Princeton, N. J., 1957), p. 143.

39. *Sen. Docs.*, 26th Cong., 1st Sess., doc. no. 450.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, p. 237.

42. Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, II, 1046-1056.

Jackson, the Maysville veto was probably intended as a political slap at Clay and the American System rather than as a general condemnation of the principle of federal aid for improvements. The President hoped to embarrass Clay before his western supporters.<sup>43</sup>

The veto may also have been intended to dramatize Jacksonian preachments of economic freedom and hostility to corporate advantage.<sup>44</sup> There would seem to be a similarity between Jackson's withholding of further federal aid to road and canal companies and his war upon the Second Bank of the United States.

Four days after the Maysville veto, Jackson rejected a bill "to authorize a subscription of stock in the Washington turnpike company." No new veto message was drawn; the President simply referred Congress to his previous statement.<sup>45</sup> Late in 1830 two improvement measures were killed by pocket veto; the first was a routine appropriation for lighthouse construction and harbor improvement, while the second approved a stock subscription in the Louisville and Portland Canal Company.

In his second annual message, delivered on December 6, 1830, Jackson gave his reasons for withholding approval of the two bills. He found the appropriation measure consistent with constitutional practice, but deemed it "extravagant and disproportionate."<sup>46</sup> For the first time in the history of the nation a president had failed to approve a general lighthouse and harbor bill.<sup>47</sup> Jackson harked back to the Maysville veto in giving his reasons for rejecting the Louisville and Portland Canal proposal. He stated that such a bill was unconstitutional, unnecessarily aggrandized the power of the federal government, and in his view was "dangerous to the liberties of the people."<sup>48</sup>

Jackson wielded the veto against two additional internal improvement bills. On December 6, 1832, he voted an appropriation for the improvement of certain rivers and harbors, and on December 1, 1834, he failed to sign a measure which provided for improvement of the Wabash River. The Old Hero found the former objectionable be-

43. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay*, pp. 237-238. Martin Van Buren probably had much influence over Jackson's decision to veto the bill. Van Buren was opposed to the construction of any roads which might offer some competition to the Erie Canal. For a summary of Van Buren's influence on Jackson in this question, see Sellers, *James K. Polk*, p. 145; Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era*, p. 52.

44. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, p. 58.

45. Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, II, 1056-1057.

46. *Ibid.*, II, 1071.

47. Nelson, "Presidential Influence," p. 42.

48. Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, II, 1072-1073.

cause he felt that it unconstitutionally conceded to the "General government an unlimited power over the subject of internal improvements."<sup>49</sup> He deemed the latter to be of a local character and equated it with the Maysville Road. The Wabash River bill was the last improvement measure which failed to receive the signature of the President.

In the wake of the six vetoes, Jackson hastened to assert that he was not hostile to internal improvements, but wished "to see them extended to every part of the country." He added:

But I am fully persuaded, if they are not commenced in a proper manner, confined to proper objects, and conducted under an authority generally conceded to be rightful, that a successful prosecution of them can not be reasonably expected.<sup>50</sup>

Jackson vetoed the Maysville Road bill and the Louisville and Portland Canal stock subscription for the political and constitutional motives outlined above. There appears to be no concrete solution, however, to the question as to why Jackson chose to set aside the other four bills, which had the general approval of precedent.

That Old Hickory possessed no consistent attitude toward internal improvements legislation is revealed by his later acceptance of bills similar to those previously vetoed. For example, in June, 1834, he signed a measure much like the rejected Wabash River bill which provided \$70,000 for the improvement of the Hudson River.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in July, 1836, he approved an omnibus harbor and river bill analogous to the one set aside in 1832.<sup>52</sup>

With some consistency Jackson accepted appropriations bills for the construction of post roads, continuation of the Cumberland Road, and shorter roads in the territories of Florida, Arkansas, Michigan, and Wisconsin. He also sanctioned general improvements of the Mississippi, Ohio, Potomac, Hudson, and Raisin Rivers, in addition to coastal surveys, to be undertaken at federal expense.<sup>53</sup>

The Old Hero approved a total of sixty-six bills providing for the expenditure of \$11,060,099.79 for internal improvements. Presidents from George Washington to John Quincy Adams signed appropriations amounting to \$7,207,667.78 for improvements.<sup>54</sup> This means

49. *Ibid.*, II, 1071.

50. *Ibid.*, II, 1341-1342.

51. *Register of Debates*, 23rd Congress, 1st Session, 2796.

52. *Ibid.*, 24th Congress, 1st Session, 1611.

53. Nelson, "Presidential Influence," pp. 60-62.

54. *Executive Documents*, 23rd Congress, 2nd Session, doc. no. 89, "Report of the Secretary of the Treasury—Expenditures, 1791-1833."

that substantially more money was allocated to internal improvements during Old Hickory's tenure in the White House than by the combined totals of the nation's first six chief executives.

The following table provides a categorical summary of the \$11,060,099.79 expended for internal improvements during Jackson's eight years in office.<sup>55</sup>

Year	Cumberland Road	Coastal Surveys	Other Improvements <sup>56</sup>
1829	\$ 207,437.64	\$ 34.07	\$1,088,852.97
1830	226,831.82	.....	962,408.49
1831	172,406.85	.....	808,913.31
1832	363,684.37	14,927.67	824,655.62
1833	517,187.39	19,531.47	1,216,344.71
1834	624,045.03	30,051.22	804,606.96
1835	949,144.22	34,686.89	831,257.16
1836	368,356.90	36,393.59	958,341.44
Total	\$3,429,094.22	\$135,624.91	\$7,495,380.66

In light of the information presented here, it is apparent that Jackson neither destroyed nor abandoned the principle of federal aid for internal improvements. Indeed, national efforts in the area of public works were substantially expanded by Jackson. Clearly there was no retrogression of federal support of improvements during the Jackson years.

Jackson's position on internal improvements represented a reversion to presidential sanction of appropriations for public works; that which had been practiced between the administrations of Washington and Monroe. Between 1791 and 1825 every president had given his approval to federal support of lighthouse construction, river and harbor improvements, coastal surveys, survey and construction of roads in the territories, and the Cumberland Road. The Adams' administration, under the guiding influence of the American System, was simply an interlude of departure from the accustomed tradition of federal support for improvements.

From the information assembled here, it is evident that Jackson possessed no clearly defined philosophy concerning the internal improvement of the nation. This is borne out by the ambiguities which exist in his record as a senator voting upon, and as a President considering, appropriations bills. That he presented no systematic program for public works is not strange. Throughout the course of the

55. *Sen. Docs.*, 26th Cong., 1st Sess., doc. no. 450.

56. This includes all roads other than the Cumberland, canals, breakwaters, lighthouses, and river and harbor improvements.

nation's history the people of the United States have often expressed an aversion to policies which appear to unnecessarily aggrandize the powers of the federal government. A Washington-directed internal improvements program was just such an issue. Jackson as an astute politician perhaps sensed this aspect of the American mentality and steered clear of programs which tended to dramatize the increase of federal powers. Old Hickory, by rejecting the odium of centralization associated with the American System, was able to carry forward the construction and maintenance of internal improvements at public expense within the framework of tradition-accepted practice. While not alienating those who opposed centralized economic planning, Jackson actually advanced improvements and was hailed as a friend of limited government and economic freedom.